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ABSTRACT

One of the organizational characteristics used in the Minnesota School Effectiveness Program is a positive school climate, which includes collaborative planning and collegial relationships. This module begins by identifying four types of collegial practices that characterize successful schools: (1) frequent, continuous, and increasingly precise talk about teaching practice; (2) observation of teaching with useful postevaluation conversations; (3) teaching materials that are planned, designed, researched, evaluated, and prepared by teachers working together; and (4) staff members teaching each other instructional procedures. A short summary of research is included that shows the relationships between staff members and between staff and administration to be a determinant of a climate favorable to continuous improvement of instructional practices. Fifteen implementation suggestions are then provided, along with instructions and instrumentation for (1) an activity to promote positive feedback, and (2) a staff interaction survey. A short bibliography is also included. (TE)

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ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTIC

COLLABORATIVE PLANNING AND COLLEGIAL RELATIONSHIPS

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Minnesota Department of Education
1985

ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTIC

COLLABORATIVE PLANNING AND COLLEGIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The fifteen characteristics which are used in the Minnesota School Effectiveness program have been separated into two major subdivisions: organizational and instructional characteristics. One organizational characteristic is a positive school climate: a climate which supports the goals of the school Positive school climate includes collaborative planning and collegial relationships. In her observation and study of schools, Judith Warren Little identified four types of collegial practices which clearly distinguish more successful schools from less successful ones:

1. FREQUENT, CONTINUOUS, AND INCREASINGLY CONCRETE AND PRECISE TALK ABOUT TEACHING PRACTICE.

   Teachers in successful schools are more likely to discuss "instructional" practices rather than problems, social lives, foibles and failures of students and their families, or the demands put on schools by society. Teachers in successful schools share a language which adequately describes the complexity of teaching and which distinguishes one practice and its virtues from other practices. This common language enables teachers to discuss the business of teaching.

   As instructional practices become easily definable and concrete, teachers can discuss their classroom practices and share ideas and procedures as doctors or lawyers do. Just as a "tort" is a common law term understood by all lawyers, typical classroom practices can also be labeled and discussed by teachers. For example, "wait time" is the time a teacher pauses after asking a question and before calling on a student to answer it. As wait time increases, the quality and length of the students' answers increases. If teachers share this term, they can begin to discuss effective wait time strategies. As language about practices becomes more concrete, precise and coherent, collegial activity is more possible. Rather than having to explain and define their strategies, teachers can share successful procedures and learn from each other.

2. OBSERVATION OF TEACHING WITH USEFUL POST-EVALUATION CONVERSATIONS.

   In effective schools, teachers and administrators frequently observe each other teaching and give feedback after the observation. These observations and feedback activities are supported by the "shared" language mentioned above. When teachers and administrators share common labels for instructional behaviors, these behaviors can be discussed, advantages and disadvantages weighed, and alternative procedures suggested.

   When teachers are working on developing new practices, observation and feedback are essential. Observers can help the teacher see the positive impact of the new practice even when the teacher might feel awkward. Just as interns are observed when they are learning new techniques, teachers should also be given the opportunity to practice new procedures while being observed by a colleague.

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The shared language also allows colleagues to separate practices from personalities. Colleagues can discuss the advantages and disadvantages of instructional behaviors without judging the competence of the teacher.

3. TEACHING MATERIALS ARE PLANNED, DESIGNED, RESEARCHED, EVALUATED, AND PREPARED BY TEACHERS WORKING TOGETHER.

   Most teaching practices are undergirded by appropriate teaching materials such as worksheets, reading materials, activities, quizzes, and tests. Worksheets and activities necessary to support inquiry learning are different than those necessary for direct teaching. The development of these support materials can be a burden to single staff members; but when the staff develops these materials together, the burden is lessened. Also, joint development of instructional materials requires teachers to apply their understanding of the science of teaching and aids them in attaining new understanding of teaching concepts.

4. STAFF MEMBERS TEACH EACH OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES.

   Teachers teaching each other about the practice of teaching is a common activity in successful schools. When teachers share new practices with their colleagues, it spurs other teachers' interest in new procedures, adds to their individual sense of competence and confidence in the classroom, and generates high morale. The fact that a new procedure has been used by a teacher within their own building, with the same students, in the same community helps other teachers feel that it will be possible to implement those new practices. Successful schools allow and facilitate all teachers to teach each other successful practices.

Collegiality and collaborative planning is teachers teaching each other about successful instructional practices by developing materials together, observing each other teach and giving feedback, and sharing a precise, concrete language which describes instructional behavior.

COLLABORATIVE PLANNING AND COLLEGIAL RELATIONSHIPS **RESEARCH SUMMARY**

The relationships which exist between staff members and between staff and administration are one factor which determines the culture or climate of a school. The school's climate seems to be a contributing factor in its success or failure as a place of learning (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979). Staff relationships which are characterized by collaboration and collegial relationships sustain productive school climates (Little, 1981; Hargrove, 1981; Berman and McLaughlin, 1977; Armor, 1976; Glenn, 1981; Tresman, 1977; Deal, 1977).

Schienfield's (1979) study found that three organizational climate variables are related to the success of a change effort:

- collaborative working relationships among staff members
- teacher participation in decision making
- principal-teacher relationship

Joyce and Showers (1983) found that when teachers master a number of different teaching models they gain competence and effectiveness, but the transfer of new skills from training sessions into classroom practice is difficult. Transfer is aided by collaborative efforts and by the coaching of teaching. Coaching involves five functions: (Joyce & Showers, 1982)

- Companionship: sharing perceptions, success and failures, mutual reflection
- Technical feedback: quality control of the new strategy
- Analysis of application: knowing when and how to use the new strategy
- Adaptation to students: helping students learn new behaviors
  Facilitation: giving support and aid when going through awkward stages of learning a new behavior.

Little's study (1981) reported that there are three norms that exist within schools which support continuous improvement of instructional practices: a norm of continuous improvement, a norm of experimentation, and a norm of collegiality. In schools where new practices are embraced, examined, and implemented, the norm of continuous improvement prevails. This norm means that teachers recognize their professional commitment to continually improving their instructional practices; all teachers need to continue to be updated on new, effective practices. It is also a norm within these schools that each teacher can risk practicing a new method without fear of reprisal if it does not go well the first time. The principal recognizes that perfecting or refining a new instructional behavior takes time. Fifteen to twenty practices may be necessary before a new behavior becomes integrated into a teacher's repetoire. A safe environment where new practices can be "tried on" constitutes the norm of experimentation. Teachers working together and discussing teaching practices constitutes the norm of collegiality. Teachers that observe each other teach, prepare support materials, and have a common, precise language to describe instruction are more likely to be involved in the successful implementation of new teaching methods.

Effective schools are in a state of constant renewal. This renewal seems to be supported by collaborative planning and collegiality between staff members and between staff and administration.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Administer and discuss "Staff Interaction Survey."
2. Create "Professional Support Teams": 4-5 teachers who will act as coaches for each other.
3. Set time aside to discuss an instructional issue at every staff meeting.
4. Create time for staff members to teach/share a new instructional practice.
5. Train staff members on how to observe instruction and give feedback to each other. (See Implementation Activities)
6. Create time for staff members to observe instruction and give feedback to each other.
7. Allow time for staff to design, prepare, and evaluate instructional materials: worksheets, activities, quizzes, tests.
8. Allow time for teachers to co-teach in the classroom when experimenting with a new instructional model.
9. Provide training sessions where a common professional language is developed among staff members and use the language with staff.
10. Promote the discussion of instructional practices and procedures in the teacher's lounge.
11. Have staff members complete the Collegial Interaction Survey and discuss results.
12. Train teams to use the Time-on-Task observation instrument (Assessment Module).
13. Train teachers to use the At Task observation instrument (Assessment Module).
14. Promote after school sharing sessions where teachers exchange instructional ideas, lessons, strategies.
15. Create time for teachers to give demonstration lessons for each other.

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GIVING POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Reciprocal classroom observation and feedback lead to and support collegial relationships among staff members. This activity has the potential of bonding professional educators or alienating them depending upon how feedback is given.

Sparks (1983) in her review of effective staff development practices cautions us that classroom observations should begin by centering on student behavior rather than the teacher's. (There are many classroom observation tools in the assessment module which could be used to do this.) She also reports that it is important that feedback be given in a positive way. The accompanying page describes four guidelines which are helpful in giving positive feedback. Before teachers begin reciprocal observation and feedback, it would be prudent to train teachers using these strategies for giving positive feedback.

- -Positive feedback is, first, descriptive of behaviors. Completing the suggested sentence stems can be helpful in focusing on behaviors rather than perceptions.

- -Using non-evaluative statements ensures that colleagues describe and label practices rather than rate performance. Increased use of a precise, shared, professional language will result.

- -Providing the teacher with a specific description of classroom activities can allow him/her to decide what was successful and not successful. This avoids an environment where the teacher might feel defensive.

- -Constructive criticism is optional--it is not essential in giving feedback. If constructive criticism is offered it should include: 1) a description of activities or behaviors and 2) an alternative technique that could be used in its place.

To practice these new behaviors or skills a suggested activity might be to have a group of teachers view a short teaching experience (10 min.) either by film, video-tape, or live demonstration. Ask them to prepare feedback on the lesson using the format which follows. New behaviors should be practiced before teachers observe and give positive feedback to each other.

Use the practice sheet as a checklist when the first collegial feedback is given.

GIVING FEEDBACK

TO GIVE EFFECTIVE, POSITIVE NON-EVALUATIVE FEEDBACK USE:

1. DESCRIPTIVE STATEMENTS

   Use a sentence stem and a description of behavior or what happened.

   I saw _____.
   (Describe action)

   Example: I saw that you checked at the beginning of the hour that all your students had completed their homework. That technique communicates to students the importance of homework and achievement.

   Other stems: I saw ... I observed ... I heard ...
   I noticed ... I tallied ...

2. BE NON-EVALUATIVE

   Watch that you don't use words like <u>super</u>, <u>wonderful</u>, <u>poor</u>, <u>great</u>.

   NOT: You asked too many questions. You were grilling them.
   BUT: I tallied that a question was asked every 3 seconds. Less than a second was given for student response.

   NOT: You handled that student well.
   BUT: I noticed you stood by Terri to quiet her down rather than having to speak to her. That technique is an example of proactive management.

3. BE SPECIFIC, NOT GENERAL

   NOT: Great lesson!
   BUT: I saw written objectives for each of the training sessions. Clear objectives helps learners focus on what they are to learn and increases learning.

4. TO OFFER CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM, USE SENTENCE STEMS, DESCRIPTIVE STATEMENTS, AND OFFER AN ALTERNATIVE TECHNIQUE

   Example: In most sessions we have worked in our school teams. To add variety and help us meet other people, we should have a chance to work with people from different schools.

November, 1984

POST-OBSERVATION FEEDBACK SESSION

EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK:

1. "I" statements: I (observed, saw, noticed) (described action).
2. Non-evaluative
3. Be specific, not general
4. Constructive criticism: "I" statement plus alternative

1. _____ was observed on _____.
   (Name) (Date)

2. The topic of the lesson was _____
   _____
   _____
   _____.

3. Objective discussed during pre-observation was _____
   _____.

4. Complete some or all of the following sentence stems:

   I observed the way you...

   I noticed students...

   I learned...

   I relearned...

   I saw...

   I heard...

5. We decided that the next step(s) to take in this classroom for more effective instruction is/are:

_____OPTIONAL_____

6. Areas in the lesson the teacher felt were the strongest.
   Areas in the lesson the teacher felt could have gone better.

7. For constructive criticism complete:

   I noticed (Describe action). Another technique to accomplish that is (Describe alternative).

_____

STAFF INTERACTION SURVEY

The survey assesses the frequency of the staff interactions which focus on professional and instructional activities. Teachers are asked how often they receive advice from other teachers about curriculum, grading, and discipline; how often they discuss issues with other teachers; how often they discuss instruction, learning needs, or non-school issues with other teachers; how often they design instructional materials; and how often they discuss instructional issues with the principal or other building administrators.

After teachers have responded to the survey, the results can be tallied, averaged, or converted into percentages. The results should be shared with the staff and discussed.

STAFF INTERACTION SURVEY

1. How often do you receive volunteered reactions or advice from other teachers about your approach to the following factors?

	(5) Very often (daily or several days a week)	(4) Fairly often (weekly)	(3) Fairly infrequently (biweekly or monthly	(2) Rarely (bimonthly or each sesmestar)	(1) Never
a. Curriculum planning					
b. Grading practices					
c. Teaching of specific lessons					
d. Student control and discipline practices					
e. Manner of working with individual students					

2. How often do you talk with other teachers about:

a. General curriculum plans for the class					
b. The schedule of teaching activities					
c. Student reactions to a specific lesson					
d. Getting teaching resources or supplies					
e. Learning needs of a particular student					
f. Personal gripes or concerns about work					
g. Matters unrelated to school and teaching					

3. How often have you

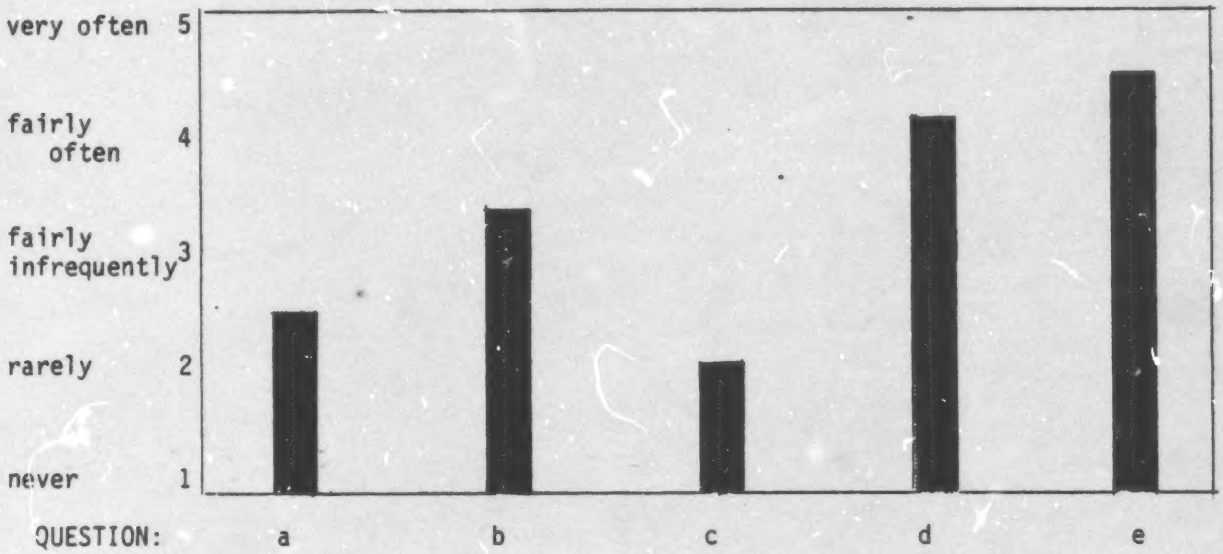
a. Observed other teachers in their classrooms teaching					
b. Been observed while you teach					
c. Discussed instructional methods with other teachers					
d. Planned and designed instructional materials with other teachers (lessons, worksheets, quizzes, tests)					
e. Given feedback to other teachers on their instructional methods and techniques					
f. Been taught a new instructional method by a colleague from your school					

4. How often do you talk with the principal or other building administrators about the following?

a. General curriculum plans for the class					
b. The schedule of teaching activities					
c. Student reactions to a specific lesson					
d. Getting teaching resources or supplies					
e. Learning needs of a particular student					
f. Personal gripes or concerns about work					
g. Matters unrelated to school and teaching					

Sample: Averaged Results

Sample: Averaged Results



Collegial Interactions Survey

Below is a series of statements concerning collegiality and collaborative planning. On the scale to the LEFT of each statement place an "x" at the point that represents your estimate of the *present situation* in your school. On the scale to the RIGHT of each statement place an "x" at the point that represents where you believe your school *should be and could be.*

PRESENT SITUATION		SHOULD BE AND COULD BE
rarely ... occasionally ... more often than not ... almost always 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	a. Teachers often observe each other in their classrooms and give feedback on instruction.	rarely ... occasionally ... more often than not ... almost always 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
rarely ... occasionally ... more often than not ... almost always 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	b. Teachers frequently discuss instructional methods and techniques in the lounge, during staff meetings and after school.	rarely ... occasionally ... more often than not ... almost always 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
rarely ... occasionally ... more often than not ... almost always 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	c. Teachers work together to master new instructional methods or strategies.	rarely ... occasionally ... more often than not ... almost always 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
rarely ... occasionally ... more often than not ... almost always 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	d. Teachers share a common language about instructional techniques and practices.	rarely ... occasionally ... more often than not ... almost always 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
rarely ... occasionally ... more often than not ... almost always 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	e. Teachers plan and design instructional materials together (worksheets, quizzes, exams, lessons).	rarely ... occasionally ... more often than not ... almost always 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
rarely ... occasionally ... more often than not ... almost always 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	f. Teachers share effective instructional strategies with each other.	rarely ... occasionally ... more often than not ... almost always 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

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rarely — occasionally — more often than not — almost always

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

rarely — occasionally — more often than not — almost always

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

rarely — occasionally — more often than not — almost always

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

g. Time during staff meetings is devoted to discussing the uses of different instructional strategies.

rarely — occasionally — more often than not — almost always

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

h. Teachers learn from and with each other.

rarely — occasionally — more often than not — almost always

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

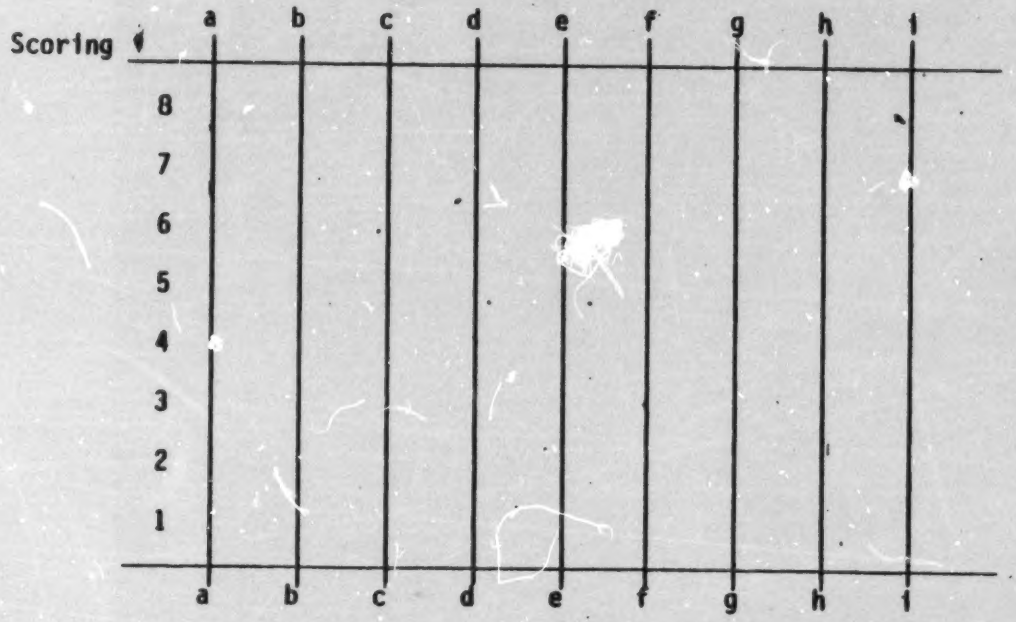
i. Lounge discussions center mostly on instructional practices rather than social concerns or complaints about students.

rarely — occasionally — more often than not — almost always

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

SCORING

+ In our school teachers talk and work together to improve instructional practices.



- Teachers rarely discuss instruction —the classroom door stays closed.

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